the Bridge
NEWSLETTER of the BRITISH COLUMBIA
FIRST NATIONS FORESTRY PROGRAM

Success Stories from the First Round of FNFP funding

In 1996 when the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) provided $1.2 million to 43 First Nation forestry projects, the concept was and wasn't totally new. Says Program Manager Nello Cataldo, "Previous programs such as the First Nations Woodlands Program and others made funds available, but for use only on reserve lands. That was very limiting. For the first time on a broad scale, the FNFP funds projects involving joint ventures, new partnerships and opportunities off-reserve as well. If the projects meet the objectives of the program, they can be wherever the forest economic opportunity that exists at the status community level."

The objective, simply stated, is to successfully involve more First Nations entrepreneurs, organizations and companies in forestry as a way of achieving economic independence. The means to achieve this end are as diverse as the industry itself. And, just eighteen months after the first round of projects was approved, there are already success stories to tell.

Says Cataldo, "The FNFP isn't meant to pay all or even most project costs. The program provides seed funding to help make things happen. In many cases, the relatively small amount of funds we are putting in is leading to much larger projects. Other money is coming from the Bands or other partners. For instance, if we fund the development of a business plan to put a sawmill on Band land, or fund the acquisition of business or industry skills so that Band members can get contracts or become employed, then First Nations can create their own economic independence."

NELLO CATALDO

In the first round of 43 projects the FNFP, which is delivered through a 12-member Management Board including First Nations, industry and provincial and federal government representatives, assisted a wide range of projects. Many involved skills training - like the silviculture training that has brought jobs, and a whole lot more, to the Uchucklesaht Band in Port Alberni. Some were large in scope, such as the formation of the BC Native Contractors Association. Some were more focused, such as the contribution which allowed native artist Richard Krentz to improve and expand his forestry business. All provided the start to something bigger.

The FNFP recently announced the second round of project approvals which will provide $818,000 to fund 31 more projects (which will be outlined later in this newsletter). Said Cataldo at the time of the announcement, "I feel confident that this current list of projects will continue to meet the Program's objectives, and the needs of B.C.'s First Nations communities."

Canada

FNFP Success story #1: RICHARD KRENZ - Queneesh Studios

Another step on the path to success

Born with his Coast Salish mother's soul and his German father's mind, Richard Krenz has been a gifted artist since his youthful hands first grasped the tools of his trade. But like most artists, the road to his dream took some difficult - albeit fortuitous - detours. Now, assisted by funding of $50,000 from the FNFP, the dream is much closer to reality.

Until 10 years ago, Krenz had forsaken carving and its punishingly small financial rewards to work in the forest, milling and logging. For years, he selected and bought logs for Japanese buyers, supervising their cutting and offshore shipments. Then the 80's arrived and for him, as for many businesses, the bottom fell out.

"I lost my shirt and my soul," he says. "It changed my life. I didn't want any longer to cut huge trees and make lumber. I wanted to make something to sell to the end user. I knew the cuts, and how to choose woods. I began carving."

Today, his Queneesh Studios in Black Creek produces 15 different authentic native products, ranging from feast ware to bentwood boxes, all of it from wood which would otherwise be destined for the chipping mill. And he has also returned to his real love, which is carving "big art" such as the Commonwealth totem pole which he did for the Games in Victoria in 1994. But while he now has some 240 clients who buy his works for personal and corporate gifts, his move from cottage industry to big business will take both effort and money.

"The program funding has helped me come another step down the road, at a time when I needed it," Krenz says. "We have to constantly improve the jigs and keep tooled up, and we needed a business plan to focus our efforts." The funds helped produce his business plan, and the design and construction of a display rack system which will allow him to control how his merchandise is displayed in retail outlets. And it will assist him to move his studio to the Squamish Band lands in Vancouver, a move he plans to make this Fall. "Here, we can locate our production facility in conjunction with the Feast House on Grouse Mountain, so people can see the entire operation, from the carvers working on the pieces to the store where they can be bought. When it is at full capacity, the studio could employ 100 native people, using lumber which I want to get through a partnership with a native mill - probably from the Sechelt Band. It isn't just about making money, it's also about increasing the value of the trees."

"The only way we're going to make money from our forests is to add value to them"

As well, his FNFP funds will help with his ongoing work to develop and gain acceptance of an authenticity mark which would be used to identify genuine native art works. "More than $104 million worth of so-called native art is sold in Vancouver every year," he says, "and only 5% of it is authentic. Use of the mark would benefit both the native artists and the buying public."

His studio, and his expanded plans which the FNFP has helped to fund, are to Krenz a logical extension of his lifelong love affair with the forest. "The only way we're going to make money from our forests is to add value to them", he says. "Products like ours have true added value and this could be a vibrant industry. There's room for thousands of people like me in this industry."

QUENEESH

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FNFP Success story #2: HEATH KREVESKY - HuuAyAht FN

On The Road To Economic Independence

A working partnership with an off-reserve company and $20,000 from the FNFP have helped to bring the Huu Ay Aht First Nation in Bamfield further along the road to economic independence. Under an existing agreement with MacMillan Bloedel, the funds provided six Band members with the hands-on training which has gained them employment in the forestry industry - and hopefully will help to bring the industry home to their own reserve lands.

Heath Krevesky, Forestry Manager for the Band, says, "Our short-term goal is to increase employment for our members. When I came here in January, there was high unemployment on the reserve. It's now decreased by about 20% and being able to get training is a key element. The program with MacMillan Bloedel was good - the training provided basic forestry skills for the employees and then tested them in the forest."

"We've got a total of 12 people contracted to MacMillan Bloedel now - I hope that'll increase to at least 20 very soon. It makes a major difference in a small (the reserve population is about 150) community such as ours. Now, Band members have been submitting contract rates for a variety of silviculture projects in the area. Some of these include planting, weeding and brushing."

The FNFP funds have also assisted the Band in their efforts to get a woodlot license for logging off Reserve land. "The area we have requested wasn't being considered by the Ministry for a Woodlot License so it will take some time, but at least now we can keep the process going" says Krevesky.

"When I came here in January, there was high unemployment on the reserve. It's now down from that by about 20%"

Having a larger employable workforce within the Band has made positive changes for the Huu Ay Aht First Nation. "I guess the biggest one is the obvious one," says Krevesky."and that's seeing these people get up at 4 am to go to work."

RICHARD KRENZ

HEATH KREVESKY RECORDS A CULTURALLY MODIFIED TREE IN HUU-AY-AHT TRADITIONAL TERRITORY

Positive changes for the Uchucklesaht Band

Near Port Alberni, forestry companies MacMillan Bloedel and (more recently) Interfor hold licenses which take in most of the traditional lands of the Uchucklesaht Band. And for decades, the logging operations in the area have not involved the Band members. Today, after a contribution of $49,752 from the FNFP, nine members were able to receive training in silviculture. The funding also allowed the Band to successfully negotiate contracts under which they are currently employed - eight full time with MacMillan Bloedel, and one who moves in and out of the crew as required and is presently working part-time at Interfor.

> the right people in the right program at the right time

That in itself is a success story, but for this small Band (about 30 people on the Reserve in the winter and 50 in summer) the ripple effect of employment has made a positive change that can be felt throughout the community. Says Pat Deakin, Special Projects Co-ordinator for the Band, "We now have eight families earning a paycheque. They're not on social assistance. They don't have to move away. The grant money has made a huge difference in the existence of the contracts and in the lives of the individual members."

The Band members selected for the training program (two women and seven men) saw the opportunity this training represented. While some had worked in the bush before, none had the skills required under the available contract. Says Deakin, "The effects were immediate. One of the elders remarked that things were much quieter on the Reserve at night - the crew were too tired to do anything but sleep. Other members noticed that the crew would return each day carrying their saws and disappear. They were sharpening and servicing their equipment for the next day."

In order to get the crew up and running, the Band paid for their saws and gear under an agreement which would see most of the cost repaid to it out of the crew's paycheques. The remainder was forgiven with the suggestion that the crew members do some community work. As a result, they did brushing on the Band's hatchery road.

The crew members were also trained in first aid, all initially receiving Level 1 certificates with transportation endorsements and later, between contracts, getting their Level 3. In numerous instances, both on and off the job, this training has been put to use.

Says Deakin, "We've noticed that having a meaningful job and the potential to make a substantial amount of money has had some very positive results for these people and their families."

Deakin points out that while he's not trying to paint a picture of total rosiness, there's a different feeling on the Reserve now. "We're finding the crew members are willing to set aside personality issues and work and learn from others. One tribe member remarked that Band members, Council and staff had been prone to looking at the negatives and what they were not doing. This program has let us focus on the positive."

"What it's done," Deakin summarizes, "is to make nine members of the community much more employable. Most have been on the job every day without fail. There's a lineup for their positions, but I can't see any of them giving them up. Without the funding, it would have taken much longer, if it could have been done at all. The contract might never have been negotiated and certainly wouldn't have waited for us. We had the right people in the right program and were provided with the right funds at the right time."

Trainees now successfully employed

Borland Creek Logging is a band-owned logging operation on the Williams Lake Band Reserve just outside Williams Lake. Therefore, when monies became available under the FNFP, applying for funding to train more Band members in forestry practices appeared to be a complete win-win project.

It has been, according to Garth Greskiw, of the Cariboo Tribal Council who worked with the Band on the project. A funding contribution of $22,000 was used to hire contract logger and forester supervisor Karl Hennig of Single Tree Logging Ltd. and his three fallers, who, along with company manager Darrell Sellars, provided 22 Band members with field and classroom training. As a result, eight of the successful trainees are now employed or on call at Borland Creek Logging.

The program began last December and continued through Spring breakup. "It was very successful," says Greskiw, "despite having to postpone some of the field work because of the early breakup. Although the Band does have some money, without the FNFP funding, we wouldn't have been able to afford this kind of training through the Central Interior Logging Association funding alone. The field work was on loaders and skidders as well as falling and bucking training. And there was no absenteeism from the classroom training."

The First Nations Forestry Program allowed for transportation from the Reserve to Williams Lake for the classroom training. The Band contributed half the equipment cost, with Forest Renewal B.C. picking up the other half.

The field work was done in an area in which Borland Creek Logging has a timber sale, so at the end of the training period, the company got the wood that was harvested. Says Greskiw, "This worked out well because the company worked more slowly during the training period, but they were able to get a bit of extra money for doing it. Right now, they're in finishing up, so they'll be able to recoup a little more. The company now feels stronger knowing they have better trained Band members they can call on."

> "The company now feels stronger knowing they have better trained Band members they can call on."

B.C. Native Contractors Assoc., a bridge for native business

Until recently, most native contractors had to find their own contracts, without the assistance of existing organizations which serve a largely non-native membership base. But, with a $50,000 grant from the FNFP, this is in the process of changing. A group of five native founding directors is establishing the first B.C. Native Contractors Association.

According to Ray Gerow, a founding director and President of the new Association, "Until now there's been no one place potential employers can go to find out where to contact native contractors. So now, along with membership solicitation, we're compiling a database of native contractors and what equipment they have. Then when, for instance, the Forest Service needs work done, we can provide them with a list of qualified native contractors. We won't make recommendations, but the employer will have information to make a selection. Eventually we'll compile a second database of employers so that it can work both ways."

"...we're compiling a database of native contractors and what equipment they have."

The FNFP funding will allow this new association to hire a part-time staff member to undertake the start-up work that has until now been done on a volunteer basis. "Like any new organization," says Gerow, "everyone in the native community thinks it's a great idea, but you still have to sell them on its merits to encourage them to join. We've found most companies are more than willing to hire native contractors, especially here in the north. It's a matter of letting them know who's available."

As membership increases (target for the first year is 50 members), the organization will become self-funding. Annual membership fees are $100 per piece of equipment registered, to a maximum of $500. Geographically, they will cover all of the province north of Williams Lake, starting in the area around Prince George, Burns Lake, Smithers and Fort St. James, then spreading out. (A similar organization for the south of the province has received funding under the second round of FNFP funding.)

"Hopefully," says Gerow, "this will help solve the problem of a lot of equipment sitting around idle, which is particularly serious when we're lucky in this part of the province if we get a six-month work season in the forest. Now if for instance someone in Fort St. James has a contract which requires equipment which one of our members in Burns Lake has, we can put them together."

While the emphasis in the organization is on forestry-related service, Gerow says they will take contractors from other trades as well. "There's no reason why the organization couldn't be equally effective for, say, a native home builder. But at the moment, we're concentrating on getting more native contractors into the forest and related silviculture activities. The perception is that jobs in the forestry community tend to be awarded through a kind of old boys network. We're helping our members to get into that network. It's a way of levelling the playing field for them."

RAY GEROW

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FNFP Success story #6: LANA GARBITT - Garbitt Wood Products

A Great Experience For Trainees

A contribution of $49,474 and an intensive three weeks of worker training provided 10 people from the Saulteau and Halfway River Reserves in the Chetwynd/Moberly Lake area with what amounted to a crash course in forest harvesting, milling, construction and personal and business skills training - and a chance to see first-hand what having those skills could mean in the future.

Said Lana Garbitt of Garbitt Wood Products, whose husband Nick did much of the training, "We couldn't have provided this training without funding from the Program. It was a great experience for the trainees, and one of them is working for us now and two more will be in the near future."

Garbitt got an advance bank loan so that the training could get underway quickly. She said, "we had done a needs assessment survey in the community and 30 or 35 people had shown a lot of interest in the sort of program we proposed."

Included in the training were basic forestry skills and additional modules in alternative harvesting methods such as horse logging and sawmilling, carpentry mathematics, value added products and log cabin building. Nick Garbitt handled most of the training, with assistance from a student teacher from the Band's Muskoti Learning Centre and logger Jimmy Gauthier, whose 30 years experience added to the depth of the program for the trainees.

"Teams of three trainees went out into the forest with the horses for three days at a time and then rotated with the other team over a two week period," said Garbitt. "That and the log cabin building were great for them. Nick built our own 2,800 square foot log home himself, and he really enjoyed passing that experience on to the trainees. If we were doing it again," Garbitt added, "I think we'd try to do it in two weeks instead of three. And probably put the logbuilding component nearer the first of the program instead of at the end." The program benefitted Garbitt Wood Products in giving them potential employees with the skills needed to work within the company and the industry. "It's good that we'll be able to employ three of them here," she said, "and it has given them skills that they can take anywhere within the industry."

"We couldn't have provided this training without funding from the program."

1997/98 Projects

The Program's Management Board announced the second round of projects to be funded by FNFP.

Says Management Board member and First Nations Coordinator at UBC's Faculty of Forestry, Gordon Prest, "The Program has been received very positively in the native community and I think the second round of projects put up for consideration shows this. It's an opportune time for development off-reserve in partnerships and joint ventures with the treaty process underway for many of our First Nations."

Nello Cataldo, FNFP Project Manager, said that while diverse, all theprojects funded had some commonalities."Because of the different economic levels in the bands, the projects reflect very different needs. But all are looking at building skills in business and in forestry and increasing the capacity of Bands to control their own affairs. This includes linking with off-reserve forestry opportunities and operations to achieve common goals through partnerships and joint ventures with the forest industry and government."

GORDON PREST

With the announcement of the second round of projects, total funding to date under the program is over $2 million. Support has been given to First Nations individuals, Bands, Tribal Councils and native owned businesses or projects involving 70 of the province's 197 First Nations.

Recipient	Community	Project Title	FNFP Funding
Aboriginal Contractor Assoc. of BC	Kamloops	ACABC Forestry Division	$30,000
Alliance Tribal Council	Delta	Forest Resource Management & Business Plan	$30,000
Anspayaxw Dev. Corp.	Hazelton	G.P.S. Technological Services	$30,000
Bird, Peter	Ft. St. James	Onjo Contracting Business Dev.	$29,500
Chehalis Indian Band	Agassiz	Log Home Construction Bus. Dev.	$30,000
Chemainus Band	Ladysmith	Woodlot License Acquisition and Forest Business Establishment	$10,000
Chingee, Dora and Vincent	McLeod Lake	Lendor Contracting	$15,000
Community Futures Dev. Corp.	Kamloops	First Nations Forestry Bus. Dev.	$27,248
Cook's Ferry Indian Band	Spences Bridge	Qua'eet Forest Products Ltd. Joint Venture	$30,000
DEMDOMEN	Clinton	DEMDOMEN - Log Home Bus. Dev.	$30,000
Ditidaht First Nation	Port Alberni	Est. of a Wood Manufacturing & Remanufacturing Venture	$20,000
First Nation Technical Support Team	Kamloops	First Nation Technical Support Assoc.	$30,000
Gitsegukla Economic Dev. Corp.	Hazelton	Aboriginal Businesses - Your Future in Forestry Workshop	$17,000
Hesquiaht Band	Port Alberni	Economic Dev. Opportunities Workshop	$15,000
Huu Ay Aht First Nation	Bamfield	Est. of a Wood Manufacturing & Remanufacturing Venture & Silviculture Company	$20,000
Klahoose First Nation	Squirrel Cove	Management Plan for Woodlot W0090	$30,000
Ktunaxa Kinbasket T.C.	Cranbrook	Akicla'in Business Dev. Project	$30,000
Kwakiutl Band Council	Port Hardy	Kwakiutl Silviculture Contractor Training	$30,000
Leon, Nelson	Chase	THUNDAK Silviculture	$30,000
Maquinna Dev. Corp.	Black Creek	Back to Basics: Traditional Management of Natural Resources	$30,000
Mount Currie Indian Band	Mount Currie	Capacity Building for Forest Resource Management	$30,000
Nicola Tribal Association	Merritt	Innovative Forest Practices - Pilot Project	$30,000
North Thompson Indian Band	Barriere	Capacity Building/Natural Resource Coordinator Project	$30,000
Old Massett Village Council	Masset	Capacity Building/Forest Officer Project	$30,000
Osoyoos Indian Band	Oliver	Osoyoos FN/Weyerhaeuser Canada Partnership Dev.	$25,000
Robbins, Phillip	Alkali Lake	P.J.Robbins & Sons Trucking	$24,500
Sliammon Development Corp.	Powell River	Resource Management: Tenure & Joint Venture Development	$30,000
Taylor, Walter B.	Ft. St. James	Taylor Cut Sawmills Ltd.	$30,000
Upper Similkameen I. B.	Keremeos	Strategic Business Plan & Forest Development Plan	$15,000
Williams Lake Indian Band	Williams Lake	Williams Lake Band Reserve Lands Management Strategy 1997	$30,000
Soda Creek I.B.	Williams Lake	Xatsull Forest Management Business Development	$30,000

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